Running for 44 pages, Adrian Piper’s “Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism” is nearly twice as long as the other pieces. It is also the most technical of the essays and presupposes considerable knowledge of Kantian ethics. Piper’s thesis, at bottom, is that “a Kantian conception of the self contains the resources for explaining and reforming xenophobia” (199). Such a phenomenon “is of particular concern for African Americans,” she submits, since “[a]s unwelcome intruders in white America we are the objects of xenophobia on a daily basis” (189).

In the final analysis, Pittman’s book thoroughly enriches and rewards. It also provides a compelling portrait of a substantial tradition of philosophical work, born and bred in the crucible of struggle.

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This is the third book in a trilogy that attempts a comprehensive view of the semiotic. While a trilogy and united in the author’s mind as a firstness, secondness, and thirdness, each of the books stand alone and have value for their own sake as part of a Peircean semiotic library. The first book, *Signs Becoming Signs: Our Perfusive and Pervasive Universe* (1991), is interdisciplinary although significantly influenced by the works of David Bohm, in quantum mechanics, and Ilya Prigogine, Nobel laureate studying physical chemical systems “far from equilibrium” where chaos can creatively produces a new order. The second book, *Semiosis in the Postmodern Age* (1995), as secondness, has a character of the interdisciplinary, returning to chaos and quantum theories, plus an interweaving of the works of physicist John A. Wheeler (a world renown relativist), Derrida, Habermas, Baudrillard, and others. However, the book leans more toward criticism in the process of indexing, and it is filled with diagrams and categorical lists that we come to expect from Merrell.

Generally addressing thirdness, *Signs Grow* is minimally biological and continues to address some of the same themes found in Merrell’s earlier books. The thesis is that ordered complexity, amid plurality, produces generals (thirds) degenerating into greater plurality, the semiotic process of signs begetting signs. The biological, then, is to be found within the semiotic process, not uniquely removed from the inorganic, nor even uniquely human, but rather a part of the whole semiosis. Such a semiosis permits a single sign to yield a single interpretant, which is yet another sign, unbounded within the scope of its own semiotic process, yet bounded by the semiotic triad of this first sign. In like manner, the human mind (going back to Peirce’s “Man of Sign”) separates itself from the rest of the semiotic context (unbounded) until a Heisenberg reminds us of our connectedness within the system and so binds the human sign to the larger semiotic. Thus, Merrell ends his text with the cryptic “Thus the universe is, yet somehow is not,
what it is, for her/him: an immanent whole. And s/he is, yet somehow is not, what s/he is, for it: a mere sign among signs."

At first blush, it seems that Merrell is talking out of both sides of his mouth in the same moment—e.g., what is, is fixed and vague, simulaneously. He writes (p. 268): "Everything is both affirmative and negative, pregnant with its contrary. The universe incessantly engages in ongoing agnostics." In his postmodernity or postmodernism he seeks a place to stand, realizing that the standing is not possible, but that he is caught up in the process of Peircean semiotic, informed by I Ching dynamics, Kurt Gödel, Erich, Manfred Eigen, Michael Polanyi, Arthur Eddington, Michel Foucault, M.C. Escher, Jean Piaget, and every author of the last eighty years (it seems). His position, then, appears to be the "middle of the road," somewhere between the "absolute vagueness" and the "absolute generality," (p. 287).

Why is his position in between? Because, he suggests throughout the text, we are between the formation of all physical laws, all biological beginnings, and the evolution of language, on the one hand, and the "logical-ultimate-final" interpretant of all signs (p. 38) on the other hand. The absolutes of possibility of firstness and the general argument of thirdness are the two ends the semiotic cosmos. There is no thirdness of mind in the former to comprehend the formation of physical laws, nor is there potential for a mind to think "the ultimate sign of absolute generality," (p. 287), so we are bound as completely as Prometheus to the begetting of signs.

Merrell does a superb job explicating this postmodern tension of semiotic life in between. His approach, however, might be more impressionistic than anything else. He paints his naturalistic view with strokes of mathematics, linguistics, anthropology, and physics. He discusses time, imaginary numbers, the essence of humans, space-time, entropy, and the dynamics of communication, all as part of an outward panoramic view, as if each thought, each linguistic expression, each mathematical argument, or each biological creation, in short, each evolving interpretant, contributed to the expansion of the universe—both physically and semiotically.

While I highly recommend the book, there are some concerns. First, there are some flow problems, between sentences, and between paragraphs, which give a more impressionistic view, than a developed argument. Many times the jump yields a conclusion that does not result from the argument at hand. For example, (p. 287) playing off Peirce's you cannot think about the thought you are currently thinking, Merrell offers "... the thinker cannot him/herself, during the selfsame act, be considered part of the perfusion of signs composing the universe. Hence the ultimate sign of absolute generality cannot be thought." Besides the fact that the thinker can still be considered part of universe, the ultimate sign cannot be thought because that would yield another interpretant, which would be beyond the ultimate.

Second, there are a few places where I simply must disagree. For example (p. 286), Merrell suggests: "As signs independent of our/any interpretations, they are meaningful to some degree, but their meaning is inauthentic without the collaboration of a semiotic agent, the fourth actor on stage whose function is that of prodding the sign on to its best performance yet. Without semiotic agents, signs could offer no representation for someone in some respect or capacity, and
the whole semiotic river, the entire universe as a perfusion of signs, would eventually dry up. While all higher forms, according to Peirce, can be derived from the triadic, all that is needed is the triadic to build those forms. The universe is composed of those semiotic triads, interrelated and interwoven as they are between the two absolutes mentioned above. They define the semiotic river, rather than a quadratic semiotic defining it. Such an argument on Merrell's part suggests that we, necessarily, are outside the semiotic in order for it to work. The semiotic process has formed us and allows us to interpret signs, including ourselves.

Finally, while I appreciate Merrell's attempt at inclusive language, he mixes approaches to non-sexist language and his often used "her/him" is cumbersome for the reader. For example, on page four, he uses the "her/him," then uses the female "her" on the next page. I recommend to authors and editors alike the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, which has an excellent section on how to word various phrases, inclusively, while keeping maximum readability.

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The Perfect Baby: A Pragmatic Approach to Genetics. Glenn McGee. Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 1997. xii + 166 pp. $52.50 (cloth); $18.95 (paper).

In his The Perfect Baby: A Pragmatic Approach to Genetics Glenn McGee uses, as he puts it: "classical American pragmatism to solve a problem in bioethics" (p. vii). The book begins with a chapter on the four genetic technologies of reproductive medicine. In this chapter McGee also lays the groundwork for his main thesis, that the use of genetic engineering to improve humanity may be dangerous, but is no more morally problematic than the generally accepted use of piano lessons, mega vitamins, or expensive private schools. McGee arrives at this conclusion by applying the pragmatic method to the issue of human genetic engineering. This allows him to bring social and environmental aspects into the discussion, resulting in a view that is much richer than many current approaches.

In the second and third chapters McGee discusses some hopes and fears to which genetic technology has given a rise. We see enthusiastic visionaries like Brian Stableford, careful pessimists like Hans Jonas, and staunch opponents like Jeremy Rifkin. In the fourth chapter McGee shows that these hopes and fears result primarily from an exaggerated notion about what genetic engineering can do, which McGee traces back to a belief in genetic determinism. McGee goes into large extend to show that this latter belief is not warranted, undermining most, if not all of the horrors and hopes that are often hastily associated with human genetic enhancement. It is in particular at this point that pragmatism comes in, and shows great potential. Biological traits are not the one dimensional outcome of a genetic predisposition, but result from an interaction between genes and environment, a process in which also the genes themselves are susceptible to change. In chapter six McGee further uses the pragmatic tradition to formulate several practical principles for using genetics to deal with parental decisions and health problems.